

TOPICS OF THE TIMES.

A CHOICE SELECTION OF INTERESTING ITEMS.

Comments and Criticisms Based Upon the Mappings of the Day—Historical and News Notes.

The weather prophet is always without honor in his own and every other country.

CHICAGO "walking delegates" will hereafter ride bicycles. Another sign of hard times. Ordinarily "walking delegates" ride in carriages.

THREATS are murmured if women don't get the suffrage in New York they'll rise in rebellion. Let's hope we'll never see the sex up in arms against man save in the good old way.

A WOMAN shot herself while listening to a performance in a Paris theater. We have some pretty rocky companies in this country, but the victims usually manage to escape before the suicidal point is reached.

WHILE they were about it, the Kansas City ministers who petitioned Congress not to decrease the number of chaplains in the army might have put in a request for an increase of chaplains in the House and Senate.

THE National Council of Women has offered a prize for a design in girl's dresses which will leave the limbs room for free play and will not contract the natural outlines of the body. What's the matter with the Mother Hubbard?

STATISTICS show that men are more liable to insanity than women. This is accounted for by the fact that actions and expressions which would be reckoned absolute proofs of insanity on the part of a man are accounted perfectly natural and proper on the part of a woman.

WHETHER young Gould broke his engagement with an actress, or whether she broke it, is something that the public, clamorous as it is for valuable information, seems destined not to know. Alongside the identity of the miscreant who assailed Billy Patterson, the circumstance takes its place as a mystery.

FROM old De Lesseps has been indicted again, this time upon the charge of misappropriation of millions in connection with the construction of the Suez Canal. The old count, who won fame as the greatest engineer the world has ever seen, will, if he lives much longer, go down to history with the undecidable title of "Napoleon of Finance" as well.

A WRITER for an Eastern paper says "the perfect way to eat strawberries is to pluck them from the vines yourself, and devour them then and there." It may be remarked also that the perfect way to eat a Georgia watermelon is to go to Georgia and eat it, but it is not everybody who can do that. It is wicked to try to make people dissatisfied with themselves or their surroundings.

FROM the last census it appears that there are a million and a half more women than men in this country. That settles the woman suffrage question. With such a majority against them men's rights would disappear forever, and the world would be treated to the sight of the once proud man seeking by flattery and tears to extort money enough from his wife to buy a cigar or a pair of spring trousers. No; it shall never be.

A CAPITAL story is told of Miss Margot Tennant, who became the wife of the English Home Secretary, H. H. Asquith. Mr. Benson, the author of "Dodo," who took Miss Tennant for the heroine of his story, wrote to that lady: "Dear Miss Tennant: All the world is talking of you and my novel; when may I come to see you?" She replied: "Dear Mr. Benson: Did you really write a novel? How clever of you! Come and see me at any time." When he called she was out.

AT Fisherville, near Attleboro, Mass., a fire in the woods became uncontrollable and threatened several houses. As the flames were sweeping toward the houses several of the women and two or three men, having done all they could to stay the conflagration, fell on their knees and prayed for rain. Within five minutes a cloud passed over the village and rain began to fall in torrents. At the same time the wind changed and the fire was shortly quenched. It will be hard to persuade those people that their prayers were not answered.

THE Virginia courts have disposed of a murder case in a manner which should have a restraining influence upon people who are disposed to take the law into their own hands. On Sunday morning a girl was murdered by a negro. The criminal was

promptly arrested and a body of soldiers saved him from being lynched. On Wednesday morning his case was presented to a jury at the regular session of court, no arguments being made either by the state or the defense. At 9:32 the jury retired, and seven minutes later they returned with a verdict of guilty, there being no question of the prisoner's full responsibility for the crime, and sentence of death was pronounced.

EDMUND YATES, who died in London, was a man who will be missed in the English metropolis. Without professing to be a great reformer like our recent visitor, Mr. Stead, he probably did more to keep aristocratic blackguards in order than all the other editors in London. His activity in this direction got him into jail upon one occasion, but his incarceration did not abate the vigor with which he waged war upon blacklegs and rogues of the so-called better classes. Yates was really more American than English in his newspaper methods, and as he has left practically no imitators or successors his loss will be all the more severely felt by that portion of the English reading public which prefers vivacity and snap to dull and ponderous editorial platitudes.

BATTLES without bullets is what modern warfare is coming to, if Tailor Downie's coat proves to be all that is claimed for it. Of course, shells will continue to blow up whole battalions, whether they wear bullet-proof coats or not, but the rifle will be practically obsolete. After a time it would be abolished by common consent, and war would become a great game of dodging batteries, and of chess playing on green fields with living men. Slaughter would unquestionably be lessened, and the way would be opened for the abolition of gunpowder—which has, on the whole, been far more of a curse than a blessing since its invention. Battles without bullets will be succeeded by battles without batteries, and perhaps we may gravitate back to the old heroic combats with sword and buckler.

WHEN the war ended there were many thousands of negroes among the Indians, who had been held as slaves by the Cherokee, Creek, Seminole, Choctaw, and Chickasaw Indian tribes. The Government emancipated these and many of these freedmen were adopted as citizens of the several nations. The Chickasaw freedmen remain unadopted to this day, and are therefore without any permanent arrangement for the education of their children. The African Methodist Episcopal Church has organized churches and schools among these people and has carried this burden for many years. But the work has become so extensive that the church has been compelled to appeal to the Christians of every name for assistance. It is estimated that \$50,000 is necessary to carry on the work now engaged in, and a general appeal has been made to all Christians to assist in this work.

CHICAGO MAIL: A young Chicagoan, E. J. Church, has brought suit in the Federal Court for \$25,000 damages against the State University of Nebraska for conspiring with his father to disgrace and ruin him by refusing him a diploma after six years' work in the college. If Mr. Church can get his \$25,000 he will be in very much better fix than if he got many degrees. Being a bachelor of arts is a fine thing, but \$25,000 is finer, and if this misguided young man thinks we mistake the comparative values let him drop into any newspaper office and secure the commercial quotations on the graduate. A collegiate degree is valued most by those few and rare American citizens who do not happen to have secured one. If a man keeps still about it and his friends do not give him away it will never do him any particular harm to have graduated, even if he has been made a bachelor by the Hoopoo university of Hoopoo County. But when he thrusts his sheepskin into the work-a-day world and demands the "rights, immunities, and privileges" which, in had ecclesiastical Latin are claimed for him upon the parchment he at once invests in trouble. In fact, there are no rights, immunities, and privileges which distinguish the completed senior from the freshest of freshmen, nor have there been any in English-speaking lands since good Queen Bess and her days. Even then it was only the vested right not to be hung like common people for capital crimes which distinguished the cleric from the common herd. It is the benefit of clergy that Mr. Church is anxious for \$25,000 worth.

We heard a man complaining today because of bad luck. That's what people are here for, to have bad luck.

When a man hears of a woman man later, he takes great pride in the reflection that she has never met him.

A TRAGEDY OF LIFE.

Girls Who Live and Die in Ignorance of the Ode de World.

One day I stopped for dinner at a house in the Cumberland mountains, so deep in the fastness that I had to employ a guide, says a traveler. The family consisted of a man and a wife, with six daughters, and a more ignorant lot of people, I think I never saw. After the dinner of bacon, beans, and corn bread, the man and girls went back to the field, and I talked awhile to the woman before resuming my journey. She was a typical mountaineer, tall, angular, and sallow, but there was a gleam of intelligence in her face, quite unlike the lack-lusterness of the usual woman of the mountains.

"Don't you get very lonely, away off here to yourself?" I asked her as she busied herself about the table.

"I reckon I nought, ef I had time," she replied, "but I don't give myself no time to think about things like that."

"And what about your girls? Don't they want to get out among the people?"

"Not ez I ever heard 'em say." And then she told me they could neither read nor write, nor had they been to school a day in their lives. Upon asking the reason the mother replied that she would not allow them to go.

"Them girls," she said, "don't know nothin' but these here mountains, and that thar river down thar, they don't know what is goin' on in the world outside, they never seen no steam cars, nor boats, nor telegraphs, nor telephones, nor fine houses, nor beautiful clo's, nor gentlemen, nor ladies; they don't hardly know thar's such, but I do, 'er I've saw people ez her seen 'em, and they've told me; many's the night I've gone to bed and cried myself to sleep in the lot that was my bedroom, thinkin' about what thar was in the world that I couldn't hope to get a look at, I got so I could read, and then I read about 'em all, and that made it wuss, thar was nothin' but mountains and loneliness and silence for me, and I co'dn't help myself nohow. Then I married Jim, and we come here; Jim can't read nor write, and the pore feller is satisfied, 'er he don't know no more than the girls does, and they're company for each other. The girls might get like I wuz ef they learnt readin' and writin', and how could they ever get away from this place and go among sich different things? They couldn't, just the same ez I couldn't, an' if I kin keep 'em from knowin' whut's away off whar the mounts is ain't, ner the lonesomenes, 'er the silence, I'm a goin' ter do it, and let 'em live and die right here whar they air a heap better satisfied than thar mother has ever been, though they never heard her say nothin' about it, one way ner 't'other, ner they never will."

A Doctor's Nerve.

"I was employed to cure a dead man," said Dr. C. R. Greeg, of St. Paul, at the Laclede, says the Globe Democrat. "I was awakened during one night and found a lady awaiting me. She told me that her husband was very ill and for me to bring my medicine case and some surgical instruments, as I might have to perform an operation to assist him to breathe. It was but two blocks from my office to the house of my patient, and as we entered the room where the man lay no one else was visible.

"At a glance I saw that he was dead. I told the wife that her husband was beyond the reach of mortal aid. 'He is not dead, and you must cure him,' she said, and locked the door. Then going to a dressing case she procured a revolver. I saw that she had become crazed, and was at the time a dangerous lunatic.

"Making the best of the situation, I began an operation on the wind-pipe, the woman watching me closely. I worked with the corpse and prepared medicines for three or four hours, assuring the woman that I should save him if possible. Succeeding in disarming her fears, she began to have fixed confidence in me, and when I fixed a potion and gave it to the corpse, seemingly taking on a similar one myself, I induced her to take one in order to quiet her nerves, as it might be some time before any change took place in the condition of the patient.

"I soon had the satisfaction of seeing the woman fall upon the floor in an insensible condition, and I made my escape from the house, calling sufficient assistance to attend to the wants of the wife and prepare the husband for burial. But I don't want any more calls to resurrect the dead, under the superintendence of a dangerous lunatic."

Anthony the Wanderer.

Insight into the strange condition of the popular mind in Russia at the close of this nineteenth century is afforded by the immense renown and influence enjoyed at present by a peripatetic saint who goes by the name of Anthony the Wanderer, and who for more than 40 years has been perpetually on the move, his peregrinations extending all over Siberia, Central Asia, and European Russia. In the depth of winter, just as in the height of summer, he marches barefoot and almost entirely devoid of clothing. Fifty pounds weight of iron chains are welded around his shoulders and body, while his waist is encircled by an iron belt weighing thirty pounds more, closed with a lock, the key of which he cast into the Arctic Ocean. Thus equipped, Anthony the Wanderer has spent two-score years in tramping all over the Russian Empire, collecting enormous sums of money for the building of churches and schools in places where they are needed without keeping a single kopeck for himself. He is venerated not alone by the ignorant peasantry, but also by the most

highly educated and affluent classes, and men and women of all sorts and conditions of life are desirous of applying to him for advice in matters spiritual, worldly, and even hygienic. —New York Tribune.

The French Village Laborer.

The material condition of the day laborer is not so good as it was fifteen or even ten years ago; one may confidently affirm that they earn 23 less than they did, and a farm servant of twenty years 42 less. Still, rent is the same, the taxes, however slight they may be, have increased, wood is dearer, bread is certainly not cheaper; clothing alone costs less now. The cause of this state of things must undoubtedly be attributed to agricultural depression which has pervaded all Europe, and to the bad harvests of the last ten years. However, their condition is much better than it was half a century ago in every way. Then men might be seen thrashing the corn in winter, working by the light of a lamp from 3.30 a. m. to 10 p. m., receiving only 10 a day and their food, and during harvest they earned only 16 a day.

A farm servant of 14 years of age, who now earns at least 14 a year, then received only his food, the farmer supplying him with wooden shoes and a blouse; at 17 only would he begin to earn a little money. As a rule the French laborer is sober, industrious, hardworking, and thrifty, his chief aim being to save a little money or to buy land to leave to his children. As a rule families are not numerous, and one rarely, if ever, sees such early marriages as are frequent among the lower classes in England. One reason is that the military service is compulsory; every man, unless physically disabled, is bound to serve for three years, from 21 to 24; so they cannot marry till this is over at any rate, and many do not till much later. However, the military service is certainly borne without reluctance and as a matter of course by most Frenchmen.—The Contemporary Review.

Not Hard to Hit.

A young clergyman once preached a strong temperance sermon. When he had finished the people's warden said to him, "I am afraid you have made a mistake. Mr. Jones, a well-known member of the congregation and supporter of our charities, is a distiller; he will be angry."

The parson said, "Oh, I am sorry! I will go and explain it to Mr. Jones, remove any unfavorable impression, and tell him that I did not mean to be personal."

Accordingly he waited upon Mr. Jones, who, in addition to the pursuit of distilling, also was interested in a good many other branches of trade, and was not distinguished above other men as an ascetic. The pastor expressed his regret to Mr. Jones for anything in the sermon which hurt his feelings. He was somewhat relieved when, with a jovial air, Mr. Jones said, "Oh, bless you, don't mind that at all! It must be a mighty poor sermon that doesn't hit me somewhere."

Elephant Leather.

A new industry is being developed in France, and if you mean to be in the fashion you had better take note of it at once. Some years ago in the gentle crocodile which was selected as the fittest animal for providing you with new purses, bags, cigarette cases, boots, shoes, and all the rest of leathery knickknacks. Now it is the elephant that has to give his hide for the same purpose.

At Paris even now you can buy a card or cigar case of crocodile hide which has been glorified by a six months' sojourn in a bath of oak bark in the tanner's yard. The price of the little toy is from 15 to 20 guineas, and if you are ambitious enough to wish to purchase a small crocodile valise "and no one there to hinder" you may do so for the sum of from 15 to 20 guineas. The tanned elephant skin is also reported to make carpets of unrivaled strength and of a grand originality.—Paris Letter.

Spanish Pride.

Pride is the birthright of almost every Spaniard, and the fact that one of the race may take up the occupation of a beggar does not shut him out from the possession of it. An American traveler relates that, in alighting at a hotel in Granada, he saw a man at the door put out his hand toward him.

The traveler supposed that the man was the porter of the hotel, and offered him his valise. The man stopped back, tossed his head, and frowned scornfully.

"Caramba!" he exclaimed. "Do you take me for a porter? I would have you understand that I am no porter."

"Indeed? Then may I ask you, senor, what you are?"

"I am a beggar, sir, and asked you for a ms."

PHANTASMS OF THE DESERT.

Mysterious Mirages Seen on a Journey by Rail to the Coast.

The strange mirages of the desert in the neighborhood of Barstow, Colo., are causing unusual interest and not a little superstition, especially among those not familiar with the freaks of light, heat, and optics on the burning sand plains. For a great distance every way from Barstow the ground is baked under a torrid sun, and the strangest phenomena have resulted. Wonderful stories are told of the sights seen from the trains, in addition to the lakes bordered by green trees, grass, and flowers, which, under the spell of the phenomena, appear to dot these plains, the passengers are seeing queer figures of men and women in boats, and sometimes floating in the air.

"I don't know what to make of the queer condition of things," said John Forsyth, a brakeman on the Atlantic and Pacific, to a correspondent of the New York Sun. "I am not superstitious, but the sights I have beheld in the last two weeks have made me wonder very much as to what the mirages really are. Last Thursday morning our train pulled out of Barstow for The Needles. The night had cooled the parched plains, but in a few hours, when the sun had climbed high, it grew hot again. About fifty miles east of Barstow we saw a sight that we shall all remember to the latest day. A great sheet of water loomed up on the plain a few miles away from us. It looked like a long, straggling lake in the sand plain, and several passengers threw up their windows and began to say that the air was already cooler, and that it would soon be very pleasant. I told them that it was nothing but the mirage. They couldn't believe it, and thought when the road curved toward the great lake that we would soon be running along its borders.

"They waited, of course, and what happened to them has happened to passengers day in and day out for weeks before. They never got any nearer. But at length a strange thing happened. We ran for an hour, and then beautiful palm trees skirted the lake which here and there pushed into the sand, forming beautiful bays. Finally we approached a singularly pretty bay, on which there appeared to be men and women sailing in a fantastic way. The figures grew plainer, and it was to be seen that they were to all appearances human beings. Some were in white and others in much the ordinary garb of the plains. Suddenly some queer patches grew in the sea above the lake. They assumed shape and then it was seen that they bore the bodies of men, but they looked uncanny and ghostlike. Strange faces were out, but no sound could be heard. They moved about as though borne on a wind that now and anon changed its course, but no wind was blowing. There were seven or eight figures in the air and more than a dozen on the lake. Like a flash the figures in the air and on the water and the green trees disappeared, and the sea itself was gone. Everybody gave a cry of relief. They had been bound as if by a spell. Several thought it was an actual lake, but the figures in the boats were too uncanny to be real, and then there were those that had been in the sky! That was too much, apparently, for anybody to be an idea that genuine. Yet some had an idea that through some strange hocus-pocus of nature they might have been men. These strange figures of men and women have been seen by others than those on our train. The railroad men have talked about seeing them hitherto. Near The Needles about a month ago there was a little lake, on which were three of them. I would like to see some of the scientists take hold of the matter and make some investigations.

Taking Scalps.

Just when the mutilation of the dead by tearing the skin from the head began will never be known, says the Pittsburgh Dispatch, for the origin is lost in the mist of ages, the record extending back beyond even the mythical period of man's existence. In the book of Maccabees it is recorded that at the termination of one of the battles of which that bloody history is so full the victorious soldiers tore the skin from the heads of the vanquishing foes. This would be evidence that the custom of scalp tagging was one of the indulgences even of those people of whom we have record in the Bible.

Be that as it may, it is an established fact that the custom is a universal one so far as savage man is concerned. Whether ethnologists can build a theory of a common origin of man from this or not, or whether this can be taken as an evidence that the Indians are descendants of the lost Israelite tribes, because of their habit of securing mementoes of hair from their fallen enemies, is something time alone can develop. Be that as it may, it is a fact that all Indian tribes, to a certain extent, scalp their enemies who have fallen in battle. Some writers on the subject of Indian habits and customs deny this, but I believe that no tribe is absolutely free from the taint of having taken the scalp.

Exaggerated Case of Piano.

The piano fiend is plainly not to be found only on the outside of a hou e, or the following announcement would not have appeared in the advertisement columns of a London newspaper a few days ago: "Adolphus: Return to your Matilda. The piano has been sold." What a history of domestic discord evolved out of what should have produced harmony seems to lie beneath the surface of that brief sentence.

A Royal Anniversary.

In China they certainly celebrate royal occasions in a regal manner. The sixtieth anniversary of the Dowager Queen came around lately. In honor of the occasion there were woven one million two hundred thousand pieces of red silk, each forty feet wide. These were used exclusively in decorating the streets of Peking.

FUTURE OF THE HORSE.

It Is Foretold That He Will Come to the Head of Hurdles.

There was a time when the wiry thoroughbred of English breeding, and perhaps the Arabian barb, were looked to as the surest means for improving the common stock of horse flesh. Consul General Judd reports from Austria-Hungary that the American trotter is now the favorite breed in use for improving the native blood. If Austria-Hungary cannot do better than come to America for this purpose it argues well for the superiority of the trotter. As a beast of speed the distinctive trotter is an example of modern evolution. It is not many years since a speed of three minutes for a mile was reckoned good at a trotting gait. Now there is hardly a farmer's son in the country that does not own a colt that "can clip a mile in three minutes, and not turn a hair," at least so the young man says. A speed of two minutes is not only possible, but probable in the immediate future, and the time may be not far off when the American horse can trot alongside the best Derby runner.

With the constant inroads of machinery on the field of the horse's usefulness, a change is coming in the evolution of the animal. Already electricity supplants the old horse cars, and no one is sorry. One need have no sympathy for the overburdened stud on a hard grade. An electric van for parcel delivery is now working in London, and is said to be cheaper than horse-power. Promises have already been made by our inventors of electric plows, and feasible plans for freight and produce tramways across the country on roads hitherto traversed only by the aid of the horse or mule are suggested. The old-fashioned horse-power for running incidental machinery is giving place to the "coming power."

The coming horse is to be less a beast of heavy burden. Many places there are where horses will continue to drag heavy loads of a necessity. The handsome draft horse is not yet entirely to be dispensed with. But pleasure driving will continue to give a motive for the improvement of the trotting horse. The bicycle takes the place of a few saddle horses, perhaps, but the majority of cyclists care for a horse just as much as before the silent steed came into being. Many of them own a wheel who would not own a horse, but the wheel, even if built for two, is not so agreeable after all as holding the lines behind a glossy coated, lightly-stepping horse. Electric motors for carriages are talked of, but they will be expensive for a long time yet, and until their proficiency is somewhat advanced from the present stage a man even with a baiky horse would be less helpless in case of acident.

The noble, intelligent horse will not be lost sight of in the advance of civilization. Relief from the heavier duties will leave the more energy for the driving, of which every American citizen of means and leisure is fond. Whatever question their may be as to the morality or advantages of horse racing, the improvement of the trotter has made the animal more serviceable for the legitimate uses of man. If anyone believes that the interest in the horses is to give place before the inroads of electricity, let him attend some great "horse convention," and note the attention paid the splendid specimens of endurance and intelligence there on exhibition. —Boston Journal.

A National Humiliation.

Lately an American admiral was ordered by the Secretary of the Navy to take command, without delay, of the South Atlantic squadron of the United States Navy, which at the time had its headquarters at Montevideo, the capital of Uruguay.

No swift vessel of the navy was available for his transportation. How, then, was the admiral to reach Montevideo? We may suppose that he would take the first steamer to Montevideo. But what if there is no American steamer plying to that part of the world?

That was exactly the case. The Admiral was obliged to take this course. He went from Washington to New York, and thence took an English steamer to Southampton, in England. Thence he took another English steamer to Montevideo, crossing the Atlantic Ocean twice, in foreign ships, to reach his post on the same side of the ocean.

This fact illustrates the humiliating dependence upon foreign means of communication which American travelers and merchants are under.

It is not the duty of American lawmakers to consider seriously this state of things, and do what they can to remedy it?

The Chinese Wall.

The great wall of China was recently measured by Mr. Unthank, an American engineer engaged on the survey for a Chinese railway. His measurement gave the height eight-een feet. Every few hundred yards there is a tower twenty-five feet high. The foundation of the wall is of solid granite. For 1,300 miles the wall goes over plains and mountains, every foot of the foundation being of solid granite, and the rest of the structure solid masonry. In some places the wall is built smooth up against the bank, or crosses a precipice where there is a sheer descent of 1,000 feet.